

**NUTRITION SERVICES DIVISION  
MANAGEMENT BULLETIN**

**No. 02-103**

<b>TO:</b>	National School Lunch Program Sponsors School Breakfast Program Sponsors	<b>ISSUE DATE:</b> May 2002
<b>ATTENTION:</b>	Food Service Director	
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Verifying National School Lunch Program Free Meal Applications	
<b>REFERENCE:</b>	United States Department of Agriculture School Programs Policy Memo 01-14	

This Management Bulletin provides guidance on verifying the information reported on free meal applications for the National School Lunch Program.

As you know, many government agencies and the public media are looking closely at the accuracy of eligibility determinations for free and/or reduced-price meal benefits in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). One of the primary reasons for these close examinations is that many other education and related programs use free and/or reduced-price eligibility data to distribute their program funds. When information comes to the attention of school officials that questions the validity of information reported on a NSLP application, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is requesting that school districts increase their verification efforts beyond the minimum procedures specified in the program regulations, guidance, and handbooks. Specifically, USDA is asking that school districts look closely at their temporary approvals for applicant households that claim to have no income.

When an application indicates zero income, NSLP policy allows the school district to temporarily approve the application for up to 45 calendar days. At the end of the 45 days, the school district must determine if there has been a change in the household's economic status.

School districts should not grant further temporary approvals to the household unless reasonable explanations and documentation explaining the household's ability to operate without any source of income are provided.

An applicant's statement that the household's circumstances have not changed since the original application is not sufficient to grant continuing eligibility. If this occurs, USDA is directing that school districts verify the accuracy of the household's applications after the initial 45 day period. In addition, if the household declares what school officials consider to be unreasonably low income upon reapplication, USDA is directing school officials to use their discretion to question the information.

USDA is requesting these measures to meet our common goal to obtain accurate income eligibility information. If you have any questions, please contact your local Nutrition Services Division representative, the Field Services Unit at (916) 445-0850 or (800) 952-5609, or Christine Kavooras, program analyst, at (916) 322-3609 or [ckavoora@cde.ca.gov](mailto:ckavoora@cde.ca.gov).

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